DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 402 396 UD 031 419

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TITLE Boom for Whom? Desegregation, Redistribution, and Development in Charlotte, North Carolina.
PUB DATE Sep 96
NOTE 47p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (San Francisco, CA, August 29-September 1, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Blacks; *Busing; Economic Factors; Educational Change; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Partnerships in Education; Policy Formation; *Political Attitudes; Public Schools; Resource Allocation; School Desegregation; *School Resegregation; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS *Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Schools NC; *Redistributive Programs

ABSTRACT

The economic consequences and political context of the busing plan of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district (North Carolina) are explored. From an economic standpoint, busing did more to help Charlotte's business elite catch up with Atlanta's business elite than to help Charlotte's blacks catch up with Charlotte's whites. The developmental consequence of busing, in other words, were greater than the redistributive ones. The busing plan was intimately related to an urban regime, the origins of which data from the 1961 defeat of the last Charlotte mayoral candidate to carry both white working class and black precincts. In keeping with these origins, the regime was characterized by a coalition between Charlotte's business elite and an ascendant leadership within the black community that simultaneously pursued this coalition and minimized the importance of possible alliances between blacks and working class whites. The extent to which that strategy explains the busing plan's comparatively small redistributive consequences cannot, however, be ascertained with existing data. Research questions for obtaining such data are discussed, as is the applicability of Peterson's typology (P. E. Peterson, 1981) of urban policies to Charlotte-Mecklenburg's busing plan. (Contains 4 figures, 3 tables, and 64 references.) (Author/SLD)

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# Boom for Whom?

# Desegregation, Redistribution, and Development

# in Charlotte, North Carolina

Abstract: I explore the economic consequences and political context of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's successful and highly-regarded busing plan by developing two arguments: (i) From an economic standpoint, busing did more to help Charlotte's business elite catch up with Atlanta's business elite than to help Charlotte's blacks catch up with Charlotte's whites. The developmental consequences of busing, in other words, were greater than the redistributive ones. (ii) The busing plan was intimately related to an urban regime whose origins date from the 1961 defeat of the last Charlotte mayoral candidate to carry both white working class and black precincts. In keeping with those origins, the regime was characterized by a coalition between Charlotte's business elite and an ascendant leadership within the black community that simultaneously pursued this coalition and minimized the importance of possible alliances between blacks and working class whites. The extent to which that strategy explains the busing plan's comparatively small redistributive consequences cannot, however, be ascertained with existing data. Research questions for obtaining such data are discussed, as is the applicability of Peterson's typology of urban polices to Charlotte-Mecklenburg's busing plan.

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Prepared for delivery at the
1996 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association
The San Francisco Hilton and Towers
August 29 - September 1, 1996

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*As a law teacher ....there is no doubt in my mind that reforms resulting from civil rights litigation invariably promote the interests of the white majority.*

Civil rights attorney and law professor Derrick Bell conversing with his fictional heroine Geneva Crenshaw (Bell 1987, 63)

*Court-ordered busing may be handled as developmental, basically benefiting the city as a whole in one city, and redistributive, basically benefiting a few at the expense of others, in a second city.*

Political scientist Robert Waste commenting on Peterson's typology of urban policies (Waste 1993, 450).

*They would elect Martin King or Malcolm X mayor if somehow one of them could give them a guarantee of no labor unions and no minimum wage for laundry workers.*

Charlotte author and publisher Harry Golden commenting to a reporter on what he called the city's "managerial class." (Watters 1964, 76)

Each of these statements reflects one of this paper's three goals. The broadest goal, suggested by the first epigraph, is to engage the ongoing discussion about who benefited, why, and to what extent from the civil rights movement, a movement whose stamp is deeply imprinted on so much of the political and social history of the past fifty years. My second, much narrower goal is to relate one of the pivotal demands of the civil rights movement, school desegregation, to the ongoing debate among political scientists about the feasibility and utility of various typologies of public policies and urban regimes. Finally, I seek to explore the relationship between class and race in the formation and operation of the urban regime of which the busing plan was an intimate part. While each goal is important in its own right, taken together they constitute an attempt to relate the consequences of a particular public policy--school desegregation--to both its characteristics and the political coalition responsible for its adoption and implementation. Each of these goals and the relations among them requires elaboration.

## Who Benefited from Busing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg?

By way of approaching my first goal, I deal with school desegregation because of its pivotal role in the history of the civil rights movement. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system (CMS)[1] furnishes an especially appropriate geographical focus because it is the district which gave rise to the 1971 Supreme Court decision allowing intradistrict busing for desegregation, and its busing plan was generally considered among the nation's most successful (e.g., Douglas 1995, 246). Furthermore in the twenty years since the implementation of busing, rapidly growing Charlotte-Mecklenburg has boomed economically, becoming a location and

relocation site of choice for a wide range of corporations. Probably best known to the general public for its recently acquired National Basketball Association and National Football League franchises, Charlotte is more significantly, at least to a political scientist, home to the country's fourth and sixth largest banks, NationsBank and First Union. As a result, Charlotte now rivals San Francisco as the United States's second largest (after New York) banking center and is playing an increasingly important role in the nation's business and political affairs.

Much of the scholarly discussion about the consequences of school desegregation has focused on its effects on individuals' academic achievement/attainment, employment history, attitudes towards other races, and so forth. Into this debate, I have relatively little desire to enter. A range of scholarship (summarized, for example, in Braddock and McPartland 1988, and Wells and Crain 1994) persuades me that, in a context such as Charlotte's, students benefit in both the short and long term from desegregated education. My concern, however, is largely with what happened in Charlotte at the group level, in particular how busing affected the economic trajectory of Charlotte's business elite and its black community. Both the leading journalistic (Gaillard 1988) and scholarly (Douglas 1995) accounts agree with various actors (e.g. Poe 1995) that Charlotte's economic boom in the 1970s and 1980s was greatly facilitated by the (image of)[2] progressive race relations which developed in the wake of the successful implementation of the busing plan. Having also made that claim (Smith 1994, 1995a) and given the fact that busing was intended to benefit African Americans, I propose now to ask, To what extent has Charlotte's black population benefited economically from both busing and the boom it facilitated?

The experience of blacks in Charlotte invites comparison with that of blacks in another city of the New South, Atlanta, for several reasons. The first is that Atlanta has set the standard by which, for much of this century, Charlotte's civic boosters have judged their city's achievements. As the *Charlotte Observer*--the city's only daily newspaper at present--recently noted, from the Charlotte end "Atlanta is the big brother/big sister--the one that was first with big league teams and international flights and an outerbelt highway" ("Trashing Family" 1996). The rivalry goes beyond municipal chauvinism to include a struggle over which city will emerge as the southeast's financial powerhouse as demonstrated by the high-stakes 1991 merger and acquisition that allowed Charlotte-based NationsBank, then North Carolina National Bank, to become both the largest bank in Atlanta and, at that time, the third largest banking company in the United States (Covington and Ellis 1993, 307).

More weighty theoretical reasons for comparing Charlotte with Atlanta involve the desegregation history of the two metropolitan areas. At almost the same time that Charlotte was implementing its much-vaunted busing plan, Atlanta was taking a very different approach to school desegregation. In 1973, Atlanta's black leaders agreed to the so-called Atlanta Compromise, an arrangement in which black organizations largely gave up attempts to desegregate the metropolitan area's schools in exchange for political control of the schools of Atlanta itself. The segregated schooling and housing patterns facilitated by that compromise help explain why, Orfield and

Ashkinaze (1991) argue, Atlanta-area blacks have not partaken fully or equally in the benefits of that metropolitan region's growth. Consequently, it is extremely interesting to explore whether these two very different approaches to school desegregation can be associated with differences in the economic well-being of blacks in the Atlanta and Charlotte areas.

## Charlotte's Busing Plan and Typologies of Urban Policies

Consideration of the question, Who benefited from busing and to what extent? leads to discussion about typologies of urban policies and regimes. Much of the large scholarly literature on such typologies stems from Peterson's (1981) influential discussion of developmental, redistributive, and allocational policies. On my reading, the debate largely revolves around four questions: To what extent do residents of a city possess a unitary interest in development? To what extent can cities redistribute? To what extent does "politics matter" either within a city or in establishing the institutional environment (e.g., federalism) within which cities must operate? To what extent do Peterson's elegant and parsimonious theoretical categories encompass the complex urban policy universe? The last question is perhaps the most easily addressed if only because, as Waste notes (1993, 450), Peterson's typology doesn't include regulatory policies, and cities self-consciously regulate a wide range of activities. The other three questions are more difficult because their answers may largely hinge on a scholar's choice among competing paradigms or core research programs, a point which has been made by some of Peterson's most influential critics (Sanders and Stone 1987b, Henig 1992). To note the importance of such competition is not, however, to reduce the situation to that of competing epistemological ships hopelessly passing each other in the fog of some scholarly night. As Henig notes, the accumulation of empirical evidence "can break ideological stalemates by winning over the large majority of researchers whose commitments to the core [research program] are more contingent than those of the principals (1992, 376)." The study of busing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg can add to evidence that has already been obtained from other studies.

Any attempt to relate busing to Peterson's typology risks the criticism that it attacks him at at an acknowledged weak point because he readily admits that placing education in one of the three categories is " particularly difficult" (1981, 52). However, he then develops an ingenious and empirically-buttressed argument that the classification of education as a developmental or redistributive policy hinges on the differences between suburbs and central cities. In the former, he argues, the benefits of public education are roughly distributed in "proportion to the amount paid for the services" (1981, 94). Such an exchange "increases the net utility of the community. Everyone is better off than he would have been without the exchange--the very definition of a developmental policy" (1981, 94) In central cities, however, the benefits of schooling are more likely to be distributed "to all members of the community equally" and thus education "may be a modestly successful agency of redistribution" (1981, 94). Thus, the depth of Peterson's discussion about education provides ample justification for exploring the utility of his typology in

understanding the Charlotte-Mecklenburg experience. In fact, one might even suggest that education issues in general are especially relevant to Peterson's claims because he has indicated (1987, 540) that *City Limits* consciously attempted to elaborate an argument initially developed in a study of the politics of education in Chicago (Peterson 1976).

**Class, Race and Charlotte's Regime**

Regime theory--indeed almost all theories of urban politics involving human agency and many that do not--calls attention to the relationship between the actors who adopt and implement a policy, and those who benefit from it. That observation leads to my third theoretical focus: the relationship between class and race in the formation and operation of the urban regime which characterized Charlotte during the busing plan's implementation and for virtually its entire life. The paper's third epigraph--a 1964 barb by Charlotte journalist, author, and publisher Harry Golden--calls attention to one longstanding variation on the race/class theme in Southern politics.[3] Another longstanding variation-- the mirror image of the first--was acutely summarized by V.O. Key:

> It is naive, of course, to interpret southern politics as a deliberate conspiracy among the better-off whites to divide the mass of people by tolerating Negro-baiting. Nevertheless, with a high degree of regularity those of the top economic groups--particularly the new industrialists--are to be found in communion with the strident advocates of white supremacy (1977 [1949], 663)

Common to both variations is the notion--all too familiar to Populists in the 1890s and Communists and labor organizers in this century--that the primacy of racial issues in the South interferes with the development of a politics that unites black and white members of subordinate classes in challenging the power and privilege of what Key calls "the top economic groups." As Key suggests, how the "top economic groups" consciously view their activity is less important than the consequences of these two divide-and-conquer approaches in maintaining the top groups' power and privilege.[4]

From most normative perspectives including my own, the approach summarized by Golden is preferable insofar as it holds the possibility of alleviating some aspects racial inequality rather than encouraging the dogs of white supremacy to run wild in the street,[5] as the variation summarized by Key more likely does. Nonetheless, the extent to which racial inequality can be alleviated without challenging the power and privilege of the "top economic groups" remains an important question as does the extent to which such a challenge is feasible at a particular time and

1970s. Both the scholarly literature and my personal experience[7] lead me to conclude that Charlotte's busing plan was a success, using the criteria by which busing plans are customarily evaluated, i.e., their effects on the educational achievement, attitudes about racial matters, and the life chances of individuals who experienced busing. However, in the broader context of local urban development and growth, I will tentatively suggest that Charlotte's business elite may have derived substantially more benefit--especially economic benefit--from the busing plan than the city's African American community did. But that conclusion is scarcely an argument against busing or any of the so-called "social experiments" of the 1960s and 1970s. If anything, it is an argument that these "experiments" were not deeper and more sweeping, and that they unfortunately--at least in my view--failed to make more profound changes in the distribution of power and economic resources in both Charlotte and the nation. Whether in Charlotte itself any such changes were within the realm of historical possibility is a much more complicated question to which I return at the close of the paper.

## I: THE ORIGINS OF CHARLOTTE'S 1963-87 URBAN REGIME

In the early 1970s, when Charlotte adopted its busing plan, local politics were characterized by a political alliance between the city's business elite and the political leadership of the black community which was decisive in mayoral elections and many other aspects of electoral politics such as bond referenda. This coalition, I have argued elsewhere (Smith 1994), was part of an urban regime many of whose characteristics resembled the one in Atlanta that Stone (1989) has chronicled. Just as the election of Charlotte's first black mayor, architect Harvey Gantt, in 1983 and 1985 exemplified this regime, his upset defeat by conservative Republican Sue Myrick in 1987 exemplified its demise. Since 1987, no Democrat has been elected mayor, while in prior years, Democrats had a virtual lock on that office.[8] Further indicating the linkages between educational policy and the character of Charlotte's regime is the fact that the post-1987 fluidity in this regime is linked to a turning point in educational policy. Beginning in 1988, the business elite which had previously embraced the busing plan, threw its political support behind school board candidates, many of them newcomers to the board, who in 1992 voted to disband the busing plan and replace it by a system of magnet schools (Smith 1994, 1995a).

These post-1987 events have been recounted at length elsewhere (Smith 1994, 1995a, 1996), and here I am much more interested in the regime's origin than in its demise. Uncertain about the origins of the regime in this earlier work, I had (perhaps too casually ) referred to its having existed since at least the late-1960s or early 1970s. Greater precision about its origin is necessary, especially because these events illuminate (though of course do not determine) subsequent developments including the consequences of the busing plan.

In many ways, Charlotte's post-World War II politics resembled that of other sunbelt cities. Political leaders hoisted various reform and "good government" banners, but as Carl

place in history.

These general remarks about race and class are relevant to Charlotte's busing plan because the urban regime of which it was a key component was characterized by an electoral alliance between several especially prominent black political leaders and Charlotte's business elite (Smith 1994). This alliance dominated mayoral elections and other aspects of politics (e.g., city bond referenda) from 1963 until 1987. Prior to 1963, a mayoral candidate who was anathema to Charlotte's business elite had brought blacks and working class whites[6] together in an electoral coalition that came close to winning in both 1959 and 1961. Compounding the importance of the race/class theme to Charlotte's regime and busing plan is the fact that the 1963--1987 regime was characterized by the ascension to political leadership in the black community of Fred Alexander who, as I will indicate below, generally scoffed at the idea of trying to build political alliances with working class whites and/or their organizations.

A more detailed discussion of the developments which gave rise to the 1963-1987 regime constitutes the paper's first section. The second section continues the historical narrative by discussing the relationship between the busing plan and the black/business elite coalition. In this part of the narrative, I pay particular attention to the interplay of race and class in the political struggle to develop and implement busing. The third section switches from historical narrative to a quantitative analysis of census data that explores the economic progress of blacks in Charlotte-Mecklenburg between 1970 and 1990 in comparison with blacks in other areas. The fourth and final section discusses the theoretical implications of the previous three by returning to the issues raised by each of the paper's epigraphs. I begin by arguing that busing did more to increase economic opportunities for the business elite than for Charlotte's African American population. Consequently, I further argue, busing should be considered more as a developmental policy than as a redistributive one, though even when viewed from that perspective, it doesn't fit neatly into Peterson's typology. I then relate the paucity of busing's redistributive effects to the urban regime of which busing was an intimate part by asking whether such an outcome can be attributed--as the paper's third epigraph would indeed suggest--to the fact that Charlotte's ascendant black political leadership cast so much of its political lot with the business elite.

Two comments before proceeding: First, each of this paper's three goals is worthy of at least one paper in and of itself. Consequently, my argument is a broad one, and this paper represents a first attempt at developing it. Some aspects of my discussion are preliminary and/or speculative. Others are considerably more detailed, but the theoretical significance of even the detailed sections cannot be firmly established, I readily admit, without fleshing out the other sketchier parts.

Second, because this paper is less celebratory of the Charlotte experience than the leading journalistic and scholarly accounts (Gaillard 1988, Douglas 1995) and, in some ways, my earlier work (Smith 1994), I want to emphasize that my argument should not be viewed as providing support for those who blather about the "failed social experiments" of the 1960s and

Abbott notes:

> The men in the foreground during the 1950s and 1960s were the same people who could be found in the Chamber of Commerce board room or at the monthly meetings of the Jaycees, for the sunbelt reform movements operated with the assumption that leadership should come from certain groups within the local business community....From one ocean to another, it was difficult to distinguish the members of the Good Government League in San Antonio, the Charter Government Committee in Phoenix, or the Myers Park [a swank residential area] clique in Charlotte from the crowd in the country club lounge (1987, 249).

The political prominence of the "people who could be found in the Chamber of Commerce board room" went back at least as far as 1935 when Charlotte's mayoral office took the form it has today. As Leach has noted, "From 1935 through 1975 every mayor of Charlotte was the president or owner of his own business, the only exception being an attorney" (1976, 11). The two longest serving mayors--Stan Brookshire and John Belk, whose eight year tenures spanned the period 1961-1977--had both served as chairs of the chamber of commerce. Nor was Charlotte's civic leadership modest about its role. A 1960 *Observer* editorial asked "Guess Who's Boss of Our Town?" and answered:

> Charlotte is run, primarily and well, by its Chamber of Commerce....
> The Chamber of Commerce is not, of course, the sole active force....But the Chamber of Commerce is the greatest force, and the sum of its labors has been impressive.
> We are pleased to acknowledge its bossism and to wish it continued health (as quoted in Leach 1976, 11).

The constancy of such influence notwithstanding, the period 1959-1963, marks a turning point in the electoral patterns which characterized Charlotte politics. The significance of the electoral change that took place between 1959-1963 can be understood by considering earlier mayoral elections. The five which took place from 1949--the year Charlotte began reporting returns by precincts rather than wards--to 1957 were lopsided affairs, reflecting the hegemony of what Abbott calls the people found in the chamber board room. In 1955 there was only one candidate, in 1957 the victor got 87% of the votes, and in the other three elections, the victor got between 66% and 69%. In 1959, however, Martha Evans, who in 1955 was the first woman ever elected to the city council, challenged the incumbent, James Smith. She received 47% of the vote, carrying most black precincts and many working-class white ones as well. Her tally was especially impressive because she "did little advertising and hired no poll workers" (Doster 1959, 1A), the latter being a frequent local euphemism for individuals who received "gas money" or other financial compensation for mobilizing the white working class and black vote, often by whatever means necessary. Both interview data and newspaper accounts suggest that she was an especially

effective grassroots campaigner.

As the 1961 elections approached, Smith's prospects for reelection looked dim because his leadership skills were generally questioned by Charlotte's business elite as was his decision to relocate much of his company's business to another city. Worried about a possible Evans victory, Charlotte's business leaders persuaded an initially reluctant Stan Brookshire to oppose her. Although Brookshire had never held elective public office before, he had been chair of the chamber of commerce. As Brookshire candidly acknowledged in his family history:

> To the political observers and the business and civic leadership, it seemed obvious that Mrs. Evans, a capable but fiery redhead, having built a strong political base (particularly among the minority groups) during her two terms on council, would win over the field. The business and civic leadership of Charlotte was not happy with such a prospect (as quoted in Coffin 1994, 8).

With the editorial endorsement of both of Charlotte's daily papers and support from the business elite and the leadership of the Democratic party, Brookshire won the election with 55% of the vote. Again, Evans carried both black and many working class white precincts.

The topic of why "the business and civic leadership of Charlotte was not happy" with the prospect of Evans' becoming mayor deserves additional comment. It is difficult to read a newspaper editorial acknowledging Evans's ability, but then endorsing the political neophyte Brookshire because of doubts that "she, as mayor, could work closely and harmoniously with the Council," (The *Observer* Recommends 1961, 2B) as expressing anything other than the difficulties Charlotte's overwhelmingly male political and business establishment had in dealing with an assertive, intellectually formidable, and politically savvy woman.

But the apprehension went beyond gender issues. Although, like Brookshire, a supporter of urban renewal (a topic discussed below), Evans, while on Council, had often sided with the Planning Commission against various business interests. Furthermore, in the years that predated the upsurge of both the local and national civil rights movement, she had been the city council's most outspoken (and often lone) advocate of the appointment of blacks (as well as women) to various city bodies such as the Urban Renewal Commission (Young 1957). Finally, she had strong support among working class whites and the local labor movement. Weak by Northern standards, organized labor in Charlotte at that time was strong enough to cripple city bus service with a 26 day bus strike in 1958 (Stanton 1976), unionize firefighters, threaten the unionization of of other municipal employees, and maintain a strong enough organization in some of the city's textile mills to significantly influence how workers voted in state-wide elections (Golden 1959). These were no small feats in a city well known, as one historian puts it, as being a "long-time citadel of opposition to unions" (Moye 1976, 170).

Adding to Evans's significance in Charlotte political history is the fact that she was that last candidate in any vigorously contested Charlotte mayoral election to carry both black and white

working class precincts.[9] In the 1963 elections, Charlotte's white working class precincts again voted for Brookshire's unsuccessful opponent (one Albert Pearson; Evans had been elected to the state legislature in 1962). But in 1963, unlike 1961, Brookshire carried the black precincts, something he would again do in his successful 1965 and 1967 campaigns. Table I illustrates this change in voting patterns. It indicates that white working class precincts continued in 1963 and 1965 to vote against the candidate (Brookshire) supported by the business elite. But the black precincts which had previously supported Evans against Brookshire provided him with huge pluralities in 1963 and 1965.

Electoral support for Brookshire's successor, John Belk, another former chair of the chamber of commerce and four term mayor, was also rooted in this alliance between downtown and the black community's most visible political leadership. That alliance continued to be decisive in all but possibly one mayoral election until Harvey Gantt's upset defeat by Sue Myrick in 1987. For this reason, the change in voting patterns in the 1963 mayoral elections makes it an appropriate point from which to date the origins of the regime which characterized local politics for approximately twenty-five years.[10]

Two reasons account for the change in voting in the black precincts. The first was the generally conciliatory approach that Charlotte's leaders took to the upsurge of the civil rights movement during Brookshire's first term. The second reason was political developments within the black community.

**The Civil Rights Movement and Charlotte's Mayoralty**

Shortly after his victory in the 1961 election, Brookshire started publicly talking about the need for more job and housing opportunities for blacks (Leach 1976, 168). He also reorganized the city's largely inactive Friendly Relations Committee into a 29-member Mayor's Community Relations Committee which, within several months, negotiated the desegregation of several downtown cafeterias in response to demonstrations led by dentist Reginald Hawkins. In turn, the demonstrators agreed to approach the committee before launching future demonstrations (Leach 1976, 120).

That agreement typifies the generally conciliatory approach that Brookshire took towards the upsurge of the civil rights movement. The most chronicled example of this approach came in 1963 when Brookshire, the chamber of commerce president, the *Observer's* editor, and other business leaders decided to desegregate the city's leading restaurants by taking several black leaders to dine at these establishments. Rarely has a decision to "let's do lunch" assumed such mythic proportions in the accounts of any city's history (e.g., Gaillard 1988).

While this generally conciliatory approach may have had strong moral and philosophical components, it was also motivated by fears that the city's image and economic development would be jeopardized by headline-grabbing demonstrations, especially those threatened by Hawkins at the

1963 North Carolina World Trade Fair which was scheduled for Charlotte. Reflecting on the decision to invite black leaders to lunch, Brookshire would note twenty-five years later, "There is no question but that the mass marches occurring at the time in Greensboro, Durham and Winston-Salem had a coercive effect on us and the time of the decision" (Brookshire 1988, 1D).

In addition to moral and economic considerations, there were electoral ones. Brookshire would claim that his 1961 defeats in black precincts precluded pejorative interpretations that he was repaying political debts by taking a conciliatory approach to the black demands. Because, he claimed, he had "no commitments" to the Negro vote; he could act "in the best interests of all citizens" (as quoted in Watters 1964, 8). Others suggest that Brookshire's weakness in the black precincts help explain his conciliatory approach to civil rights demands (Coffin 1994, 11). Whatever the motivations for Brookshire's way of dealing with the civil rights movement, it helps explain why he subsequently did so well in black precincts.

**Political Developments in the Black Community**

Facilitating the growth of Brookshire's support in black neighborhoods were political developments within them. Such events cannot be reduced to the political activities of individual leaders, but these activities often provide a useful summary. Such is the case with the political conflicts between Reginald Hawkins and Fred Alexander, a rental agent and realtor for C.D.Spangler, one of Charlotte's largest builders and developers.

Although scholars and journalists frequently contrast the two men's styles and personalities, here it seems more useful to discuss three programmatic differences. The first involves the importance of mass demonstrations, protests, and picket lines. While Hawkins had long organized voters and would eventually run for North Carolina governor in 1968, he also, as noted above, helped organize and lead a wide range of mass, collective, political activity Alexander rarely, if ever, was involved in such activity and argued that they were basically besides the point. As he told a reporter in 1964:

> Some feel the scare technique will work....It's stupid to think you can scare people who build 50-story buildings. You can be a nuisance. But you can no more scare them than you can come in my house and scare me. It's a matter of whether I want to listen to you and see if there is sense in what you say....
>
> If it had been fear alone, Charlotte would be in the throes of a demonstration still. The willingness of the power structure and the mayor to sit down and talk was the key thing-- the ability to find Negroes and whites willing to see if the conference approach would work (as quoted in Watters 1964, 33).

Of course, Hawkins's activity on the outside made Alexander's job on the inside easier because as Harvey Gantt noted, "Fred could always use the more militant posture of a Hawkins..to

move the movers and shakers to chart a course for some change" (as quoted in Penninger 1989, 82).

The second difference involved the candidates the two men supported and the tactics they advocated in the electoral arena itself. One notable example is the 1961 mayoral election in which Hawkins supported Evans, but Alexander supported Brookshire (McElheny 1961, 1C). Perhaps even more important than differences between the individual candidates whom the two men supported were differences in their electoral strategies, especially in races for Charlotte's city council which consisted of seven members, all of whom were elected at large. Hawkins often urged blacks to vote a full slate, while Alexander called upon them to "single shot," i.e., vote for only for their favorite candidate, lest that candidate's chances be weakened by votes which other candidates might accumulate. That difference was especially sharp in 1965, the year Alexander became the first black elected to the city council in this century. Hawkins supported Alexander, but urged blacks to vote a full slate. Alexander, however, urged them to "single-shot." This tactic was widely used and generally credited with Alexander's getting enough votes to finish seventh in the election, thus winning the final seat on the council (Batten 1965, 3C).

A third difference, especially relevant here, is the extent to which the two men thought that blacks could get support from working class whites and their organizations, including organized labor, most of whose membership at that time in Charlotte was overwhelmingly white. While fully aware that white supremacist ideologies and practices interfered with obtaining such support, Hawkins was considerably more willing than Alexander to try to get it, as well as to emphasize the class aspects of the struggle of African Americans. Alexander, on the other hand, claimed, "You can't get anywhere dealing with the poor white man. He's just like the Negro--struggling (Watters 1964, 34)" He also "said scornfully that labor unions offer little or nothing in the struggle for Negro rights in the South, not even membership" (Watters 1964, 37). Those sentiments were matched by Alexander's actions. According to the only extended study of Alexander's political career presently available, he was "staunchly anti-union" (Penninger 1989, 90). During a 1968 strike of city sanitation workers, for example, he attempted to get black union members back to work. According to the strike's organizer--a white union staff member--only the high-profile intervention of a prominent black clergyman kept Alexander's effort from being successful (Pierce 1996).

As a result of these programmatic differences as well, probably, of those in personality, Alexander received considerably more support from Charlotte's business and political elite. Such support came very early in Brookshire's administration with the mayor's decision to name Alexander to the reorganized 29-member Community Relations Committee, but consciously exclude Hawkins (Leach 1976, 168). That support combined with a range of other events to weaken Hawkins's influence and increase Alexander's. Shortly after Alexander's 1965 election to the city council, an *Observer* reporter summarized his interviews with both Negroes and "white politicians who by necessity have become careful observers of the Negro political scene" by noting:

> One widespread but not unanimous impression is that Dr. Reginald Hawkins, the 41-year-old Negro dentist who drew most of the headlines as Charlotte's militant civil rights leader has lost some of his influence in the Negro community....
>
> Despite occasional suggestions to the contrary, Hawkins remains a substantial power to be reckoned with, both in political campaigns and in civil rights matters. But his influence may have declined since the height of the demonstrations in 1962 and 1963.
>
> At the same time,two other Negro spokesmen are crowding into the public spotlight that Hawkins virtually monopolized for the first half of this decade.
>
> One of them is Fred D. Alexander, a 55-year-old real estate manger who on May 4 became the first Negro elected to the Charlotte City Council since the 1890s (Batten 1994, 1C).

One suspects that the white politicians of whom Batten spoke were not just "careful observers of the Negro political scene" but people with a substantial stake in influencing it. The full and precise manner in which that influence may have been exerted remains a topic for future research. Suggestive examples of personal ties and financial relationships have, however, been noted in earlier work (Smith 1994), the most visible being Fred Alexander's longtime employment for C.D. Spangler's construction and development companies. To these examples of the use of carrots can be added those of sticks, the most prominent local example being 1964 felony charges against Hawkins for illegal voter registration activities. Although the charges were dismissed in 1968 for lack of evidence of criminal conduct (Leach 1976, 164), the extensive legal proceedings helped drain Hawkins's resources and exacerbated the decline in his support in Charlotte.

This decline is illustrated by the results of the 1968 Democratic gubernatorial primary which Hawkins entered with the support of the liberal wing of organized labor and some civil rights leaders. The campaign's foci resembled those of the roughly contemporaneous Poor People's Campaign: racial equality and economic justice for people of all races. In fact, on April 4, the day he was killed, Martin Luther King had been scheduled to campaign with Hawkins, but canceled his trip to North Carolina to deal with the increasingly tense situation in Memphis that accompanied the sanitation workers' strike. Whether King's appearance might have significantly improved Hawkins's showing in black precincts is a what-if question to which a definite answer cannot be given. But the fact is that Hawkins fared poorly in the primary, especially in Mecklenburg County where, as Leach notes:

> With 20,000 blacks registered, Hawkins got 8,051 votes. In the city's nine predominantly black precincts, where the total Democratic registration was 13,544, Hawkins won 4,857 votes --fewer than Fred Alexander won in those same precincts in both his successful 1965 and 1967 campaigns for the city council (1976, 165).

## II: BUSING, CLASS, AND REGIME

While Charlotte may have handled the desegregation of public accommodations relatively smoothly and quickly--at least by the standards of the 1960s South--the desegregation of the public schools provoked considerably more political conflict. "It was," a businessman later commented, "one thing to go to lunch with a Johnson C. Smith [an historically black university in Charlotte] professor; it was quite another to send one's child to school in a black neighborhood" (as quoted in Douglas 1995, 183). Triggering this conflict was a April,1969 ruling by recently appointed Federal District Court Judge James B. McMillan, previously a partner in one of downtown Charlotte's most prestigious corporate law firms. Drawing upon the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Green* v. *County School Board,* McMillan ruled that CMS had an affirmative obligation to eliminate all racially identifiable schools.(Douglas 1995, 140). Although McMillan left responsibility for doing this in the hands of the school board, it was readily apparent that only a significant amount of busing could achieve that goal, given Charlotte's widespread residential segregation and the location of existing schools.

In fact, McMillan partially based his decision on the fact that governmental action had heavily contributed to such residential segregation. Of special note was the previous ten years of urban renewal which had bulldozed several historically black downtown neighborhoods and replaced them with parks, roads, hotels, and office buildings, both public and government. Little attempt was made to build replacement housing for the thousand-plus black families whose residences were destroyed. As a result, most of the families relocated outward into an historically black neighborhood in one part of the city, or into what were once heavily white working class neighborhoods in another part. In the ten years prior to McMillan's initial decision, the latter neighborhoods had become almost exclusively black as whites moved to more outlying areas. Taken together, these changes dramatically increased the amount of segregation in Charlotte. In fact, Charlotte was the fifth most segregated city in the country according to one study (cited in Hanchett 1993, 521). Compounding the consequences of such residential segregation was a conscious school board policy to build the many new schools occasioned by Charlotte's growth in single-race neighborhoods (Douglas 1995, 138).

Impeccable as McMillan's reading recent history may have been, it did little to diminish widespread opposition to his decision. Riding the crest of a series of rallies and mass meetings to protest busing and build support for the school board's legal appeal of McMillan's decision, the entire slate of anti-busing candidates emerged victorious from 1970 school board elections. Of particular note because it mirrored voting patterns in mayoral and other at-large elections was a runoff between a member of the anti-busing slate and a black incumbent. In addition to carrying all the black precincts by huge margins, the black incumbent got 60% of the vote in southeast Charlotte, which, as noted earlier, was the city's most affluent quadrant and the one in which most of its business elite and political leaders lived. These votes were not enough to overcome the anti-

busing candidate's commanding margins in middle- and working-class white precincts (Douglas 1995 202)

As Charlotte-Mecklenburg rocked with political conflict in 1969 and 1970, the business elite, which seven years earlier had intervened so decisively to assure the relatively tranquil desegregation of public accommodations, now largely sat on the sidelines. Only after the Supreme Court affirmed McMillan's decision in April, 1971 did the business elite throw its considerable political weight behind the adoption and implementation of a busing plan. Of special importance was business elite activity in the 1972 school board election, the first to take place after the Supreme Court's decision. Among other things, a group of so-called "slate-makers," business executives long active in local politics, decided to intervene, for the first time ever, in school board elections by raising money for candidates "willing to live with court-ordered busing" (Observer staff writer 1972, 1A). Among these candidates was C.D. Spangler, Jr. and a black assistant vice-president at NCNB (the forerunner of NationsBank). Both these men won, as did all candidates backed by the "slate-makers." Unlike the 1970 election, in 1972 no anti-busing candidate won, nor would any win again until the mid-1980s (Smith 1994).

In the aftermath of the 1972 election, a complex struggle ensued among the plaintiffs, Judge McMillan, the school board, and various community groups to implement a busing plan. A key aspect of this struggle concerned children from Myers Park, the same swank residential neighborhood whose "clique" was credited by historian Carl Abbott (in the statement quoted earlier) with running Charlotte in the 1950s and 1960s. This neighborhood was, and indeed remains, a distinctive one. Located relatively close to downtown in the city's generally prosperous southeast quadrant, Myers Park is noted for its winding tree-lined streets, large traditional homes, and often much larger manicured lots. Over the years, the neighborhood has been home to many of the city's leading business executives, corporate attorneys, and politicians. Consequently, in 1970 as in 1996, Myers Park symbolized both privilege and power.

Little wonder then that opponents of the first busing plan--issued before the Supreme Court affirmed Judge McMillan--were quick to note that whites in the western and eastern portions of the county would bear most of the responsibilities[11] of busing and that "Southeast Charlotte was the area of the city least affected by the busing order" (Douglas 1995, 202). A subsequent plan developed by the school board after the Supreme Court's decision was even worse in this respect. This new plan, McMillan noted in response to a legal challenge by whites from northeast and west Charlotte:

> puts increased burdens of transportation upon black children and upon children in certain low- and middle-income white communities..it relieves the vast majority of students of the wealthier precincts in southeast Mecklenburg of any assignment or transportation to formerly black schools (as quoted in Douglas 1995, 221).

Although concluding that the board's plan did show economic and class discrimination,

McMillan declined to offer any relief, viewing this discrimination as a political rather than constitutional issue (Douglas 1995, 221). After several more years of political struggle, the issue was in fact settled politically by a Citizens Advisory Group (CAG). The CAG's plan "spread the burden of busing more evenly than ever before" (Douglas 1995, 240),[12] by, among other things, mandating that Myers Park children would be bused from their southeast neighborhood to an historically black high school in the city's northwest quadrant. Critical political support for this provision came from various members of the business elite including the chair of the chamber of commerce, and W.T. Harris, head of the area's largest supermarket chain and chair of the County Commission (Douglas 1995; 234, 240).

Business elite intervention,as I have noted elsewhere (Smith 1994) had a variety of motivations. Some leading business executives clearly sought to "do the right thing" and derived a moral satisfaction from (the image of) Charlotte's desegregation accomplishments that cannot be reduced to economic interests. But the latter were clearly crucial. Aware that racial tranquility and (a reputation for) progressive race relations would help attract mobile capital, local civic boosters touted Charlotte as "The City That Made It Work" and called attention to the successful implementation of busing as enthusiastically as they had earlier called attention to the series of "power lunches" which had desegregated local public accommodations (Douglas 1995, 251). Illustrative of the way the business elite talked of Charlotte's accomplishments were W.T. Harris's remarks to a national commemoration of *Brown:*

> I have looked at a lot of school systems across the country. We have got absolutely the best school system in the United States. I will say to you that any school system that isn't doing what ought to be done ought to get about it because they can make progress. We elected a Black mayor, and we are proud of him....I would say to you that prior to school integration, we couldn't have done that, regardless of how good he was. We have grown tremendously. (*Charlotte Observer,* 1984).

In addition to these moral and economic concerns, there were political ones.The busing plan was part of the policy glue which held together the alliance between the business elite and the ascendant leadership within the black community whose support was crucial for the election of pro-growth mayors and the passage of pro-growth bond referenda. Urban regimes develop, as Stone emphasizes (1993, 8), because governance is not the the "issue-by-issue process that pluralism suggests." Given the salience of school desegregation to virtually all of Charlotte's black political leaders, business elite opposition to busing, once the Supreme Court affirmed Judge McMillan, could easily have jeopardized the many-faceted coalition between downtown and its political allies in the black community. From this perspective, busing may be considered as much the cement which held Charlotte's development regime together as were Fred Alexander's

employment for C.D. Spangler, a wide range of development projects, and a complex web of personal relationships (Smith 1994).

## Busing as a Wedge Issue[13]

The business elite derived at least one additional benefit from busing. In Charlotte, as elsewhere, busing increased antagonism between blacks and working-class whites, and consequently assured that the main political divisions in local politics would not coincide with those between classes.

As noted above, the five-year (if not longer) effort to exempt affluent white neighborhoods in southeast Charlotte from busing, meant that a disproportionate responsibility for busing fell on whites from other areas, classes, and social strata. As noted earlier, it was these areas--especially neighborhoods in the eastern and western portions of country--that provided anti-busing candidates with their greatest support (Douglas 1995, 202). Furthermore, the disproportionate responsibility that these areas bore for busing frequently served to intensify longstanding racial antagonisms between the people who lived in them and blacks. To be sure, one would be extremely hard-pressed to argue that Charlotte's business elite consciously sought to use busing as such a wedge issue. Rather the continued efforts to exempt southeast Charlotte was a byproduct of the motives and efforts of other actors. Of these, the most important after 1971 seems to have been the school board's concern that white flight would weaken the public school system (Douglas 1995, 218). Given the large geographical area covered by CMS, it was difficult for a family to flee Charlotte's schools for another public school system. Consequently, the most credible threat of exit came from affluent families with the resources to afford private schools. Because of the heavy concentration of such families in southeast Charlotte, some board members argued, those neighborhoods should be exempt from busing.[14]

Given that white racism had long interfered in Charlotte as elsewhere with the development of unity between blacks and working class whites, one might suggest that the business elite derived scant additional benefit from whatever racial hostility was fostered by busing. I would argue otherwise. While the amount of additional benefit cannot be calculated with any precision, it was, I maintain, significant in a city which was challenged by the same political insurgencies that roiled the rest of the nation in those years. Whatever its shortcomings, Hawkins's gubernatorial campaign was an attempt to build unity between blacks and working-class whites. So were the efforts of various unions, including the sanitation workers whose 1968 strike occasioned Fred Alexander's opposition. The experience of another municipal union, Charlotte's Firefighters, may be even more suggestive of how busing served as a wedge issue.

***Firefighters Caught in a Crossfire***

To the extent one thinks of unions in the Charlotte area, one thinks first of textile workers. The Piedmont region of North Carolina has been the site of numerous hard-fought strikes and unionization drives, the most famous being the Gastonia strike of 1929. The role that textile workers and their unions played in Charlotte politics remains a subject for future research. But in the 1950s and 1960s, municipal workers and their unions were a force with which Charlotte's political leadership had to deal. As noted earlier, a strike of bus drivers crippled the city's bus system for 26 days in 1958. 1958 was also the year that the Teamsters announced plans to unionize Charlotte's police department. That threat prompted the state legislature to pass a law forbidding municipalities to engage in collective bargaining as well as prohibiting both police and fire department personnel from joining a labor union (Okun 1980).

The legal challenge to this law was eventually led by Charlotte's firefighters whose attorney was Julius Chambers, the Charlotte attorney who represented the plaintiffs in *Swann*. Best known for victories in *Swann* and other civil rights cases, Julius Chambers and his firm represented a wide range of individuals and organizations. Seeking a lawyer willing to fight the ban on union membership as far as necessary and to whom "the city didn't have no strings tied to," the Firefighters, according to one of its leaders:

> Threw the city a curve..a mean, nasty slider down in the dirt....We went to Julius, and a lily-white fire department hired a black civil rights lawyer (Brawley 1996).

Subsequently:

> I was called into an office with an assistant city manager, a personnel director, and all of our chiefs....and our assistant chief told me.. "get rid of the nigger lawyer or we are going to hire them here" (Brawley 1996).

Shortly thereafter, Charlotte hired its first black firefighter, creating an opening for him by transferring the secretary-treasurer of the local union to another station (Brawley 1996). Whatever tension may have been created by the hiring of a black firefighter was exacerbated by the intraunion conflict prompted by school desegregation. Many white firefighters joined anti-busing organizations and demanded that the union fire Chambers. The union leadership refused, prompting a decline in membership (Brawley 1996). What kept the decline from being "devastating" was Chambers's victories in grievance hearings and lawsuits, as well as the union's ability to secure large pay raises during this period (Brawley 1996). Absent such material successes, busing would presumably have driven as deep a wedge among the firefighters as it did between Charlotte's black community and much of the city's white working class.

Further illustrating that wedge was the nature of the various white groups who both

challenged southeast Charlotte's exemption from busing and worked to share busing's responsibilities more equitably. Both the membership and leadership of these groups came, as might be expected, largely from white professional strata; there was relatively little white working class involvement in them. Whatever interracial cooperation eventually developed in Charlotte, its most visible manifestations involved middle- and upper- class whites. The school board's attempt to protect Myers Park from busing exacerbated antagonism between blacks and Charlotte's white working class at a time when, given nationwide political turbulence, increased unity between the two groups might have had a significant effect on local politics. While I have found no evidence that any actors consciously viewed the busing plan as a divide-and-conquer strategy, that was another of its consequences from which the business elite benefited.

## III: ECONOMIC PROGRESS OF BLACKS IN CHARLOTTE SINCE 1970

Education is something the value of which cannot be reduced to whatever effects it has upon the economic fortunes of either individuals or a community. Nevertheless, education is frequently viewed as *the* mealticket to economic success. Furthermore, as a voluminous literature attests, scholars have long been interested in the effects of education upon the economic success of individuals, as well as in the particular effects of a desegregated education upon individuals' economic well-being and racial attitudes. Here, I seek to extend that discussion by exploring busing's effects at the collective, rather than individual, level. Given that busing helped Charlotte prosper, I seek to explore the extent to which busing helped Charlotte's black community prosper. As a first step in such an investigation, this section of the paper presents data on the economic progress of blacks in Charlotte since 1970. The paper's final section discusses the far more difficult topic of the theoretical significance of this data.

### Methodology

*MEASURES OF ECONOMIC WELL-BEING.* Using census data, I explore trends in the economic well-being of blacks in Charlotte beginning in 1970, the year before the Supreme Court's decision in *Swann*, and continuing through 1990. A comprehensive analysis of economic well-being would take account of income distribution, the value of property owned by blacks, the poverty rate, the geographic concentration of poverty, etc. In this exploratory analysis, I confine myself to just one measure of income and one measure of wealth. For my measure of income, I use per capita income.[15] Because "the largest component in most Americans' wealth portfolios" is home-ownership (Oliver and Shapiro 1995, 108), I use it as a measure of wealth. My specific measure is the percentage of households which are owner occupied.

*COMPARISONS WITH WHITES.* Interesting as these measures of black economic well-being might be, their significance is better understood in comparison with the same data for

whites. Presumably an increase of 20% in black per capita income between 1970 and 1980 has a different theoretical significance if white income went up 50% during this same time than if white income only increased 10%. This importance of comparing black income with that of whites is especially relevant in discussing the consequences of any policy, such as school desegregation, which is often justified in terms of increasing equality (either of opportunity or condition). Consequently, my main indicators are ratios, in particular (i) the ratio of black per capita income to white per capita income and (ii) the ratio of the percentage of black households in which the residence is owner-occupied to the similar percentage for whites.

*COMPARISONS WITH OTHER AREAS:* Whatever progress blacks might have made in narrowing the income or wealth gap in Charlotte is best discussed in comparison with similar results from other areas because I seek to explore the consequences of a policy that was implemented in the Charlotte area.

In this preliminary analysis, I compare the Charlotte area with both the Atlanta area and Richmond area. The choice of Atlanta is a theoretically obvious one. In addition to being the city with which Charlotte's civic-boosters have seen themselves playing catch-up for much of this century, Atlanta was the city in which, as noted earlier, a very different approach to school desegregation was taken. Furthermore, that metropolitan area's ongoing segregation helps explain why, according to Orfield and Ashkinaze (1991), Atlanta's economic boom has left many blacks behind.

Richmond was chosen for several reasons. First, that area's experience with extensive white flight was very much on the minds of some leading Charlotteans during the efforts, discussed earlier, to exclude southeast Charlotte from busing (Douglas 1995, 216). Second, its desegregation experience is, roughly speaking, somewhere in between that of Charlotte's and Atlanta's. In 1972, a district court ordered the merger of the Richmond public schools with two suburban school systems, but that decision was overturned on appeal shortly thereafter, facilitating continued white flight into other districts (Sartain and Dennis 1981). Third, that city's black community along with those in Atlanta and Memphis has been the focus of recent comparative scholarship (Silver and Moeser 1995) to which I anticipate relating the history of Charlotte's black community in future work.

While there are sound theoretical reasons for comparing Charlotte with Atlanta and Richmond, the exact nature of the comparison poses considerable conceptual and methodological difficulties. Exactly which places or political jurisdictions in each of the three areas should be compared with one another? There is little theoretical sense in comparing the MSA's with each other. Although by definition, an MSA involves a certain amount of social and economic integration among its component parts, Charlotte's MSA presently crosses the state line and includes some rural areas of South Carolina in which *Swann* presumably had minimal effect. A similar comment can be made about the effects of the Atlanta Compromise on the remote regions of Atlanta's current large MSA. Nor does it seem either useful or practical to compare the school districts with each other, given the fact that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg district is a large

consolidated one, coterminous with county boundaries, while the school districts of Richmond and Atlanta are coterminous with municipal boundaries. Furthermore, the balkanized nature of suburban Atlanta's school jurisdictions (Orfield and Ashkinaze 1991) makes it quite difficult to relate these school districts to census tracts from which to gather data about income and wealth.

Given the manner in which census data is reported, it is, however, quite practical to compare the central cities with each other. More importantly, such a comparison makes eminent theoretical sense. But the comparison cannot be confined to the central cities because the consequences of school desegregation are not necessarily confined to them, and, furthermore, central cities are intimately tied, both economically and socially, to the close-in suburbs. Also arguing against confining the analysis to the three central cities is the fact that certain aspects of their histories differ in ways that likely affect black economic progress. Among the most important of these differences is that Charlotte has recently been one of the nation's most elastic cities, having grown through annexation from 30 square miles in 1950 to 204 square miles in 1994 (Rusk 1994). Given the likely link between elasticity and measures of black economic well-being (Rusk 1995), it is especially important not to limit the comparison to the central cities.

Consequently, I also look at the economic progress of blacks in areas that include the central cities, but go beyond them. For Charlotte, the choice of this extended area is straightforward; it's Mecklenburg County. In addition to being coterminous with the school district, Mecklenburg County has, over the past twenty five years, been linked--economically, politically, and socially--to the city of Charlotte much more intimately than have any other areas in what is now the MSA. Similar considerations lead to the choice of the five counties which comprised Atlanta's MSA in 1970.[16] For Richmond I use the the two counties--Henrico and Chesterfield--which surround it, and into which most of the white flight occurred. For comparative purposes, I include data on North Carolina and the United States.

**Results**

Table II displays both population and per capita income data, and Table III displays data on home ownership. Based on the data in these tables, I compute my two measures of black economic progress. The first is black per capita income divided by white per capita income. The second is the rate of black home ownership divided by the rate of white home ownership.[17] The results of these computations are displayed graphically in Figures I-IV. These figures support the following inferences:

(1) Perhaps the most straightforward inference involves comparisons among the central cities themselves (Figures I and II). In comparison with blacks in Richmond and Atlanta, Charlotte's African Americans made progress in terms of per capita income. As Figure I shows, in 1969 the per capita income gap was larger in Charlotte than in the other two cities; by 1989 it was smaller. In Atlanta, the gap increased dramatically throughout the period. The Richmond and

smaller. In Atlanta, the gap increased dramatically throughout the period. The Richmond and Charlotte trends are somewhat similar; in both cities blacks takes steps towards catching up with whites in the 1970s, then fall back in the 1980s, but the fall-off is greater for Richmond.

The trends in housing data (Figure II) in the three central cities are similar to those for income insofar as Charlotte is the only city in which the black/white gap in rate of home ownership is less in 1990 than it was in 1970. However, while the trend in Charlotte is more favorable than in the other two cities, the magnitude of the black/white gap in rate of home ownership remains larger in Charlotte than in the other two cities.

(2) The picture changes dramatically when the economic progress of African Americans in Charlotte and/or Mecklenburg is compared to that of blacks in either Atlanta and its suburbs, or Richmond and its suburbs. In Figure III, the trends for all six areas are generally similar: the per capita income gap in narrowed the 1970s, but either widened or remained the same in the 1980s. Presumably this similarity in all six areas reflects national-level political and economic developments. Whatever the consequences of such national-level developments might be, little in Figures III or IV allows the inference that blacks in either Charlotte or Mecklenburg did better, relatively speaking, than blacks in the other areas. To be sure, the home ownership gap remained constant in Charlotte and Mecklenburg during the 1980s, while it dropped everywhere else. But the racial gap in home ownership in Charlotte and Mecklenburg trails that of most other areas by a considerably larger amount than it exceeded that gap in Atlanta and its suburbs.

More importantly, blacks in Charlotte and Mecklenburg do poorly in comparisons involving per capita income. As Figure III makes clear, in 1989 as in 1969, the black/white gap in per capita income was larger in Mecklenburg and in Charlotte than in all other areas. In addition to lagging further behind local whites than blacks in any of the other areas, African Americans in Charlotte and Mecklenburg also have a lower per capita income than blacks in the areas of most relevance: Atlanta and its suburbs, and Richmond and its suburbs. As Table II shows, black per capita income in both Charlotte and Mecklenburg ($9290 and $9420) was lower than that in both the Atlanta and Richmond areas ($10,300 and $10,200, respectively).

In other words, a comparison between Charlotte and the other two central cities leads to inferences very different from those involving a comparison with the other two cities considered in connection with their suburbs. In comparison with blacks in the cities of Atlanta and Richmond, those in Charlotte have made progress since the implementation of busing. But just the opposite is the case when blacks in Charlotte and/or Mecklenburg are compared with blacks who live in either Atlanta and its suburbs, or Richmond and its suburbs. Presumably the difference arises at least in part from the fact that middle-class blacks in the city of Charlotte have had less need than blacks in Atlanta and Richmond to exercise their exit option by moving outside the city limits. The extent to which this difference is a result of Charlotte's busing plan, its much greater elasticity (Rusk 1994, 1995) in recent years, or other factors is a topic for further study.

## IV. DISCUSSION

This account of local political history and the economic progress of blacks in Charlotte facilitates discussion about the consequences of busing , its relation to typologies of urban policies, and the interplay of class, race, and regime in local politics.

### The Economic Consequences of the Busing Plan

Among virtually all commentators--both inside and outside the academy--there is general agreement that the successful implementation of busing plan facilitated Charlotte's dramatic economic growth of the past twenty-five years. Typical explanations are that mobile capital was attracted to a city with (an image of) progressive race relations; whatever racial antagonisms may have developed in the early 1970s, by decade's end they were greatly overshadowed by interracial cooperation; this cooperation and public-spiritedness spilled over into other civic endeavors; and the busing plan helped cement the pro-growth political coalition between the business elite and the ascendant leadership in the black community. All of these explanations can be amplified by noting that among the business elite, the strongest support for busing came from individuals and institutions associated with Charlotte's version of the growth machine, especially central city growth (Ray and Mickelson 1990, Mickelson, Ray and Smith 1994, Smith 1994).

Charlotte was certainly not the only Southern city in which (perceived) racial tranquility and cooperation were associated with what Carl Abbott has called a "biracial coalition around economic growth" (1987, 257). But it appears distinctive, if not unique, in the extent to which a successful busing plan facilitated this coalition. Or, to draw another comparison with Atlanta, Charlotte benefited much more from being "*The* City that Made it Work" than it would have from being just one of several that was too busy to hate. Many cities could boast of successfully desegregating public accommodations; few could boast of successfully desegregating their schools, in large part because, as often noted, whites were less concerned about where they might spend a half-hour each day eating lunch than about where their children would spend six hours each day getting an education. Consequently, it is not just (the image of) progressive race-relations which benefited Charlotte, but the fact that it/they resulted from the travails of such an intense political struggle. That is the sentiment of Bill Poe who, as school board, chair spearheaded the legal challenge to Judge McMillan's decision. Poe still questions the extent to which that decision was necessary for educational purposes, but he recently commented that the *way* people came together to implement the Supreme Court decision:

> generated an era of racial good will in this community that has caused us to be a whole lot better people than we were....I think we've had tremendous racial harmony in this community....

> Our compliance with court orders....and the general positive attitude of people here in race relations has contributed tremendously to the economics of the community (Poe, 1995).

In a similar manner, noted historian of the urban South and Charlotte resident David Goldfield has also called attention to the travails which Charlotte-Mecklenburg underwent in the course of implementing its busing plan: In a newspaper interview shortly after McMillan's death, Goldfield commented:

> The greatest impact was really on the community itself..Because of the Swann case, Charlotte really had to confront the divisions in the community, not only racial divisions but quite honestly class divisions as well....
>
> Because the community came together on this very difficult issue, that was crucial to the economic takeoff that began in the 1970s.. It set the foundation for Charlotte's emergence as a great city (as quoted in Mara and Kelley 1995, p. 12A).

Because the implementation of the busing plan was crucial to what Goldfield calls the city's economic takeoff, it is evident, almost by definition, that the business elite, especially that part associated with the local growth machine, benefited economically from busing Given the fact that busing was not primarily intended to provide economic benefits to Charlotte's business elite, it is important to ask, Have the economic benefits to Charlotte's black community from busing been commensurate with those to the business elite?

The question is a difficult one, the very asking of which may raise objections. As a preface to answering the question, let me anticipate what I view as the three most serious objections:

> Objection 1: The relationship between a desegregated education and income/wealth for individuals--much less the black population of a city, many of whom were not even educated in Charlotte--is part of a very complex multivariate causal web. It is well known that the black/white gap in educational attainment has narrowed more than the black/white gap in income. In examining the effects of busing, it would be better to limit the discussion to educational outcomes or to housing patterns, both of whose links to busing are presumably much more straightforward

There is some merit in this objection; indeed, investigation of educational outcomes and housing patterns in Charlotte is part of my ongoing research, and I have elsewhere discussed national trends in both the education and income gaps (Mickelson and Smith 1995). But as noted earlier, much of the continued scholarly and academic interest in education is based on the belief that a "good education" is the mealticket to economic well-being. A similar point can be made about residential segregation; it has attracted so much scholarly attention in part because of its

large effect upon economic status. Consequently, while an understanding of the relationship between busing, on the one hand, and educational outcomes and residential segregation, on the other, would add to the picture, there is still ample reason to explore the "bottom line," i.e.,the economic situation of blacks in Charlotte.

Furthermore, my concern is not primarily with how desegregated education may have affected an individual's life chances. That topic, as noted at the outset of the paper, has been the subject of an ongoing scholarly debate into which this paper does not claim to enter. Rather, I am comparing busing's effect on the economic progress of the local black population *in toto* with its effect on the economic progress of the business elite *in toto*. In linking Charlotte's growth to busing, no scholar, journalist, or actor spends much time linking its consequences to the ability of individual firms to increase profits by hiring more productive workers. Rather the linkage involves more holistic political effects, e.g., the (image of) progressive race relations which helped attract mobile capital and the policy glue which busing provided for Charlotte's pro-growth regime. There is no *a priori* reason why these same holistic political effects could not also have facilitated a range of other programs that would have enabled blacks in Charlotte-Mecklenburg to participate more fully in the fruits of the local economic boom. While it is impossible to specify the exact nature or consequences of such programs, various possibilities include the tough enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation in all areas of life, vigorous affirmative action initiatives in both the private and public sectors, support for minority businesses in Charlotte's booming construction industry, job training programs, childcare programs, widespread early educational intervention, and support for first-time home owners.

> Objection 2: The kinds of programs just mentioned are a federal and/or state responsibility; they cannot be undertaken on a local level.

Again, the point has some merit. But to make it decisive is, in essence, to render moot this paper's main theoretical concern as well as much of the scholarly debate to which *City Limits* has given rise. Charlotte's busing plan was local urban policy *par excellence*. It had, according to all observers, important consequences for development. To say, on an *a priori* basis, that the (image of) progressive race relations and urban regime with which busing was associated could not also have been associated with significant local policy initiatives that would have improved black economic status is, in essence, to rule out the possibility that local urban policy can play a redistributive role. To rule out that possibility is to concede one of Peterson's main claims, rather than to investigate the extent to which it holds true for this case.

> Objection 3: There is no way that busing's economic benefits for either the business elite or black community can be measured precisely enough to allow meaningful comparison. To be more specific, there is no way to compare the dollar value of the component of Charlotte's growth that can be attributed to busing with the dollar value of the

improvement in black economic status that can likewise be attributed to busing.

Obviously, that kind of precise comparison is impossible. Nor I suggest is it crucial to answering the question of whether the economic gains to African Americans have been commensurate with those to the business elite. Rather that question can be divided into two sub-questions: How much better off was Charlotte's business elite in 1990 than it was in 1970? How much better off were blacks in Charlotte 1990 than they were in 1970? To this first sub-question the answer is, "considerably." To the second, I suggest, "somewhat."

The answer to the first sub-question stems from all that has been earlier said about Charlotte's growth. *Qua* a business elite whose *sine qua non* is capital accumulation, Charlotte's business elite, especially that part associated with the growth machine, has done extraordinarily well in much the same way that Charlotte itself has. The answer to the second question is more complicated. As noted earlier, in the twenty years after *Swann,* blacks in the city of Charlotte have done well relative to their counterparts in the cities of Richmond and Atlanta. But there is scant evidence that blacks in either Charlotte or Mecklenburg have done better than their counterparts in the five county area that is the heart of Atlanta's MSA. Nor is there evidence that they have done better than their counterparts in Richmond and the two counties which surround it. And in some very important ways, i.e. per capita income, African Americans in Charlotte and Mecklenburg continue to do worse than blacks in these other two places. And it is the comparison between these extended areas, rather than between central cities, that is the more relevant for this discussion because my question is not whether the city of Charlotte or the county of Mecklenburg *per se* has made economic progress because of busing, but whether blacks in these two places have made economic progress because of it. That fewer middle class blacks in the city of Charlotte have exercised their exit option undoubtedly benefits the city, but this fact is of secondary importance for an inquiry whose basic question is, To what extent can Charlotte-Mecklenburg's busing plan be associated with economic progress for blacks? The relevant comparison for exploring this question is not only with blacks who live in central cities, but with blacks who live in central cities and the adjoining areas that are greatly affected by events in the central city. [18]

To the above considerations, two additional points can be added. Whatever the theoretical significance of comparing blacks in one locale to those in another, it is worth emphasizing that black per capita income in both Charlotte and Mecklenburg remains less than 50% of that of whites, a dismal percentage that can only be considered a sign of "progressive race relations" in comparison with other areas in which the gap is even greater. Furthermore, the gap increased during the 1980s, the very decade in which the local business elite was prospering dramatically and taking unprecedented, from its perspective, steps onto the national economic stage by acquiring one major league sports franchise, laying plans for the successful acquisition of another, recruiting many new businesses to the area, and rejoicing in Charlotte's emergence as one of the nation's three largest banking centers.

Consequently, I tentatively conclude, there is little evidence that the economic gains from

busing for Charlotte area blacks have been commensurate with those to the city's business elite, and some important evidence involving per capita income, that they have not been. Or, to phrase my conclusion in terms of the comparison with Atlanta that Charlotteans are so prone to make: The implementation of busing in Charlotte did more to help Charlotte's business elite catch-up with the business elite of Atlanta than it did to help Charlotte's blacks catch-up with Charlotte's whites.

Another way to phrase the relationship between busing's consequences for Charlotte's economic growth and its black community may, I suggest, be taken from David Schulman study of how federal policies helped transform the cotton belt to the sunbelt. These polices, he notes, were "designed not so much to uplift poor people as to enrich poor places" (1991, viii). Busing, by contrast, was supposedly intended to uplift people, but in Charlotte it did more to enrich a place, which, if not poor, was a far cry from the emerging economic powerhouse it is today.

**Busing in Charlotte: Developmental or Redistributive?**

These broad historical observations have their counterparts in any discussion that attempts to relate Charlotte's busing plan to typologies of urban politics, especially the one developed by Peterson. Given his claim that the classification of education as redistributive or developmental likely depends on whether the school district is in a suburb or central city , a discussion of busing's effects in Charlotte-Mecklenburg raises especially interesting questions because the district is coterminous with Mecklenburg County which, while dominated by the city of Charlotte, even today contains some farms as well as a variety of suburban neighborhoods. In fact, the large size of the consolidated district made white flight very difficult and thus helps explain why Charlotte-Mecklenburg's busing plan was among the nation's most successful (Douglas 1996, 247). But successful as a redistributive policy? as a developmental policy? or both?

In trying to answer that question, one might employ a methodology similar to Peterson's which, among other things, uses multivariate statistical analysis to investigate the extent to which the amount of variance in educational achievement can be explained by the "unique effects of schooling" which, he argues, should be greater for redistributive educational politics than developmental ones (1981, 102). I lack the data on individual students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg which is necessary for using a methodology similar to Peterson's, but the absence of such information is not decisive. Insofar as one of the main characteristics of a redistributive school system it that it "treats all children..in any given age cohort as equals" (Peterson 1981, 94), Charlotte's busing plan would, almost by definition, have important redistributive aspects since one of its main components was a system which paired K-3 elementary schools in predominantly white neighborhoods (to which black children were bused) with Grade 4-6 elementary schools in predominantly black neighborhoods (to which white children were bused).

But to confine the discussion to greater equality in access to educational services is to overlook the widely held view that the busing plan facilitated Charlotte's development. And while *development* has a variety of meanings, the busing plan would seem to fit almost all of

Peterson's characteristics of a development policy: it enhanced Charlotte's ability to compete with other areas, strengthened the local tax base, and generated additional resources (1981, 41).[19] However, no actor, journalist, or scholar who argues that the busing plan facilitated Charlotte's growth does so on the basis that such growth hinged on the allegedly more skilled work force that resulted from a better educated black population. Rather, the links are much more indirect and holistic as noted above. Typically, they involve claims that the (image of) interracial cooperation attracted mobile capital, enhanced personal relations among individual--especially leaders--of both races, and provided policy glue that was crucial to the continued operation of Charlotte's regime. Such "spillover effects" make it difficult, if not impossible, to locate Charlotte's busing plan unambiguously in any one of Peterson's three categories. In fact, the difficulty his typology faces in dealing with such spillover effects would seem to resemble the challenges typically faced by microeconomics--the discipline upon whose perspective Peterson's work draws so heavily--in dealing with externalities.

One might attempt to resolve the difficulty that Charlotte's busing plan seems to fit both redistributive and developmental criteria by claiming that only the luxury of twenty-five years of hindsight allows one to see the plan's many developmental consequences. But no matter how effectively busing's advocates might have touted its presumed developmental aspects back in 1970, it seems unlikely that the plan would have been any less controversial. By almost any criteria, the conflict associated with busing was typical of what Peterson's analysis leads one to expect of redistributive policies. In fact, I have argued above that the intensity of the conflict was cathartic, and this very intensity facilitated the (image of) interracial cooperation which contributed to the busing plan's developmental aspects. Finally, even if one succeeds in distinguishing *ex ante* and *ex poste* criteria for categorizing urban policies, there remains the difficulty that busing did in fact lead to a somewhat greater equality in the provision of educational benefits, and thus counts as a redistributive policy as well as a developmental one.

A second and more promising way to resolve the difficulty of characterizing busing might be to draw upon Stone's discussion of regimes. To avoid the suggestion that programs have to be zero-sum, Stone suggests that certain regimes may be categorized as "lower class opportunity expansion" ones (1993, 20). That concept, like much of regime theory, may lack the theoretical parsimony of Peterson's typology, but, again like regime theory, it comprehends aspects of political reality that Peterson's typology does not. While not targeted at the lower class *per se* , the busing plan was clearly aimed at expanding the opportunities for a subordinate social group, i.e., blacks. However, while "lower class opportunity expansion" may more aptly characterize the busing plan than any of Peterson's categories, it raises other problems. First, my earlier discussion about the benefits of the busing plan leads to the preliminary conclusion that it expanded opportunities much more for those who already had them, i.e., Charlotte's business elite, than for blacks. Second, there is a certain irony in drawing upon a concept from regime theory to deal with the difficulty that Charlotte's busing plan poses for Peterson's typology. To the extent that the

busing plan defies unambiguous placement in one of Peterson's three cells, it adds additional evidence to the already voluminous critique (e.g., Reed 1987, Stone and Sanders 1987a, Waste 1993) that his typology fails to comprehend the complexity of urban policies. But to the extent the busing plan, a highly-touted attempt at increasing opportunities for a subordinate group, served to increase those for a superordinate group even more, the Charlotte experience would seem to provide additional support for the more fundamental claim embodied in the title of Peterson's book: there are strong limits on the extent to which cities can undertake redistributive polices. To that claim, regime theorists typically reply, politics matters and can alter these limits. The extent to which politics might have affected these limits in the case of Charlotte's busing plan is the difficult question to which I now turn.

## Class, Race, Regime, and the Contingency of History

This paper has developed two arguments. The first is that the busing plan was intimately related to an urban regime in which there were strong political ties between the local business elite and the ascendant political leadership of the black community, as well as increasingly weak ties between the latter and the white working class. The second argument is that busing, a policy aimed at uplifting blacks in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, may have been somewhat successful in so doing, but likely did much more to uplift a place, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, and its business elite.

Phrased in that fashion, it's tempting to conclude that the two arguments are causally related, i.e., that the busing plan had scant redistributive consequences precisely because the ascendant political leadership of the black community cast so much of its political lot with the business elite. Such a conclusion would be in keeping with the spirit of the paper's third epigraph: while a coalition with the leadership of the black community required the business elite to make various concessions, that arrangement was, from the latter's perspective, preferable to one in which the main political fault lines coincided with those between social classes.

Based on the data presented herein, however, that conclusion would be premature. There are at least two alternatives which must be considered. The first is that even without greater unity between African Americans and the white working class, blacks might have made greater economic progress had (i) other classes or groups of whites more vigorously championed such progress and/or (ii) the political struggle among black Charlotteans taken a different course. The second alternative is simply that no greater progress was within the realm of historical possibility given both local and national constraints. Unfortunately, any attempt at choosing among these three explanations would require a more comprehensive development of both of my arguments than has been possible here. Hence, I rest content with specifying directions for further research on both lines of argument.

remarks about the perspectives and actions of Reginald Hawkins and Fred Alexander merits elaboration. Especially worthy of study are the various carrots and sticks--material and otherwise--that the business elite used to influence this struggle. A more comprehensive study of various historical possibilities would also pay more attention to the personality and leadership skills of various individuals since these variables certainly matter as much to politics as politics, one likes to think, matters to outcomes and results.

(3) The political struggle among whites. While this paper's remarks about the Firefighters and the attempted exemption of southeast Charlotte from the busing plan provide an important start, this topic also requires more study. Especially important would be additional study of the actions vis-a-vis working class whites which were taken (or not taken) by the whites from professional and other middle-class strata who helped secure southeast Charlotte's participation in the busing plan.

(4) The extent to which other potentially redistributive polices were part of the policy agenda of the coalition between the business elite and the ascendant political leadership in the black community. Given that the busing was, I have argued, more developmental than redistributive, it is especially important to know the extent to which the (image of) progressive race relations associated with busing gave rise to other policies which might have had redistributive effects. Were such policies on the agenda? If not, why not? If so, who put them there and supported them, and why? In the answers to questions like these probably lie many of the answers about the extent to which the busing plan could have had more redistributive consequences.

The research agenda I have outlined is ambitious, but one, I would argue, that is well worth pursuing. The conjuncture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg of one of the nation's most important local civil rights initiatives with a dramatic economic boom provides an important opportunity to help clarify the relationship between redistribution and development at a local level. To the student of social and political history, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg experience can enhance understanding of exactly what the civil rights movement accomplished and how it might have fulfilled more of its many promises. And perhaps at an even more fundamental level, a study of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg experience may help explicate the local aspects of a politics through which subordinate groups and classes won't have to settle for the side dishes at an urban development banquet whose main course and most ample servings seem to fall--if this paper's preliminary inquiry is any guide--on plates that are already more than full.

**The Economic Consequences of Busing**

As noted above, per capita income and percentage home ownership are only two of many measures relevant to understanding the economic progress of Charlotte's African Americans relative to their counterparts in other places. Among the other other measures worth studying are income distribution, the geographical concentration of poverty, the value of assets, and residential segregation which may likely mediate between school desegregation and economic outcomes. Furthermore, while there were sound reasons for choosing Atlanta and Richmond in this exploratory study, there is a need to include more places. There is also a need to extend the analysis beyond 1990.

**The Role of Race and Class in Regime Politics**

In further developing the analysis of the interplay of race, class, and regime, several topics appear especially worth pursuing:

(1) The nature of Martha Evans's electoral support. Distinctive as her victories in both white working class and black precincts were in recent local political history, their organizational aspects require additional study. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a wide range of financial incentives was often closely linked with mobilizing the black and white working class vote in Charlotte and Mecklenburg. However, as noted above, according to newspaper accounts, Evans didn't use such incentives. Consequently, the question arises what kind of organizational alliances and agreements, if any, helped her do so well in both black and white working class precincts. Addressing that question will have the added benefit of illuminating one of this inquiry's most important counterfactual issues: what developments, interventions, etc. might have allowed her electoral coalition (or significant parts of it) to survive the upsurge of the civil rights movement that occurred shortly after her 1961 loss to Stan Brookshire. Or was it outside the realm of historical possibility that, as the civil right struggle intensified, working class whites in Charlotte might have voted in a manner more consistent with their class interests rather than with the color of their skin?

Further study of Martha Evans the political person is also necessary. Just how much importance she attached to building unity between blacks and working class whites remains unclear, as do many other aspects of her thinking, activity, and development. A northerner whose family was economically comfortable, perhaps affluent, she was married to an administrative law judge for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare whose career brought the couple to Charlotte. She merits additional study, but her uncatalogued papers in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg public library are almost certainly incomplete, the result of a sudden and tragic death from a stroke in 1979.

(2) The political struggle among African Americans. This paper's summary

## NOTES

This research was supported in part by a grant from the Winthrop University Research Council.

I am grateful to: Leon Miller for assistance in gathering the interview data and in thinking through many of the paper's main arguments; John C. Hollingsworth of the Urban Institute, UNC-Charlotte for compiling most of this paper's census data; Curt Bramblett for also gathering census data and challenging some of my most cherished assumptions about urban politics; and the staffs of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Elections, the Robinson-Spangler room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library, and the Dalton Rare Book and Manuscript Room of the Atkins Library of UNC-Charlotte for their unfailing assistance and timely responses to my innumerable requests.

I have also benefited from discussions with Bob Crain, Mike Gallis, Tom Hanchett, Karen Kedrowski, Tim Mead, Roz Mickelson, Gary Orfield, Dave Pugh, and David Rusk

I remain solely responsible for any errors of fact or interpretation in this paper.

1. As the name suggests, the district has, since 1959, been a consolidated one covering all of Mecklenburg county, 77% of whose population currently lives in the city of Charlotte. In 1990, Charlotte was the nation's 35th largest city. 32% of its 396 thousand residents were black as were 26% of Mecklenburg's 511 thousand residents. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district is the nation's 28th largest, currently enrolling approximately 93 thousand students, 40% of whom are black and 54% of whom are white.

2. The parenthetical qualification which continues throughout the paper indicates my agnosticism on the extent to which reality jibes with perception. Indeed, to the extent the economic well-being of African Americans is one indication of whether local race relations are in fact "progressive," one of this paper's main goals is to investigate the perception/reality linkage.

Furthermore, it is difficult to live in Charlotte or study its history without coming away with the impression that the most enthusiastic interpretations of the local race relations are those of economically comfortable whites. Blacks and working-class whites are typically much less rhapsodic which provides additional motivation for a white political scientist to maintain a prudent agnosticism.

3. Obviously these observations on the role of race and class have their parallels throughout U.S. politics, but I limit my remarks to the South where the issues are especially stark.

My emphasis on race and class in this already too ambitious paper precludes consideration of gender. This omission is especially unfortunate given the key role played by a woman, Martha Evans, in the events discussed below. A more comprehensive investigation of her unique role in local politics is the subject of my ongoing research.

4. The success of either approach, it should be noted, hinges on the credibility of the other, though, again following Key, I would suggest that communion between the top economic groups and the strident advocates of white supremacy was more characteristic of "areas with many Negroes" (1949[1977], 662), while the approach acerbicaly summarized by Golden was more characteristic of regions with fewer blacks, such as Charlotte where the black population was 25-30% for most of this century.

5. In using this metaphor, I have in mind Gil Scott-Heron's evocative "Poem for Jose Campos Torres" (1978).

6. Newspaper accounts (e.g., Doster 1961, 15A) typically refer to "lower income white precincts," but they were in fact heavily populated by mill workers. Hence, the more specific designation "white working class precincts" seems justified. I am grateful to Tom Hanchett for assistance in ascertaining which precincts can be characterized in this manner. It is more difficult to characterize many of today's precincts as "white working class" than it was in the early 1960s because of various economic and demographic developments--e.g., the closing of Charlotte's textile mills, changes in the occupational structure and in housing patterns, and the consequences of urban renewal.

7. From grades 4-6 both of my children were bused from our heavily white, outlying, middle-class Charlotte neighborhood to a downtown school, First Ward School, which is located in a black neighborhood surrounded by a public housing project. Prior to busing, First Ward was neglected and dilapidated. But when middle-class white children began attending the school, it was able to attract considerably more resources, both human and material, than previously. It became the district's flagship elementary school, winning a national award of excellence and providing a fine education in the traditional academic subjects as well as in many other aspects of life.

In the interests of full disclosure, I should add that as a Charlotte resident I regret the busing plan's replacement by a system of magnet schools and have written in both scholarly and journalistic forums about the dangers of increased resegregation of Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools since this change (Smith 1995a, 1995b).

8. Prior to 1987 only one Republican in modern times had been elected mayor, and then only for one term, 1977-79. In addition to having strong roots in the business community, he had, for a Republican, especially strong ties to the black community. Furthermore, his opponent's ties to the black community were weaker than those of most Democrats.' (Smith 1994).

9. At least one other candidate carried both black and white working class precincts, but he carried affluent white ones as well. In no mayoral election since 1961 has any candidate lost the affluent white precincts to the extent Evans did, but done so well in both white working class and black areas as she did.

10. Linked to changes in voting patterns were other important developments. Among them were the increasing prominence of race-relations issues in local politics and an approach by the business elite to these issues which reflected the growing importance of local black politicians. Furthermore, the city underwent dramatic physical changes in the Brookshire and Belk years. These changes involved extensive economic development and the physical transformation of downtown. Among other things, several downtown black neighborhoods were bulldozed, via urban renewal, into office buildings, parks, hotels, and roads. The displaced black population moved outward, leading several previously white working-class and middle class neighborhoods to become heavily black ten years after the start of urban renewal. As a result, Charlotte became a much more segregated city, a development which also had important political consequences as the controversy over busing would indicate.

Of course, the term *regime* is used in a variety of ways, sometimes perhaps too casually as Stoker (1995, 62) has recently argued. Conceivably a much more precise definition of *regime* than is possible here or is typically found in case studies would lead one to conclude that the early 1960s marked the emergence of a very different variant of the development regime which may have characterized local politics as early as 1945. Absent such definitional precision, the many changes which began in the period 1961-1963 make those years appropriate ones in which to locate the origins of a new regime in local politics.

11. Most writers, including Judge McMillan himself, often refer to the *burden* of busing. In the Charlotte context, I find that word too pejorative and very much prefer *responsibilities*. As is well known (Kluger 1975), busing was part of the educational landscape for many years prior to both *Brown* and *Swann*. I doubt any rigorous content analysis of educational discourse would find *burden* as frequently coupled to *busing* prior to 1954 as it has been since then. In fact, in a residentially segregated society, one might very well claim, as Judge McMillan did in a a speech to local educators that "sober reflection might lead us to believe that true education doesn't begin until we *leave* the neighborhood school" (as quoted in Martin 1974, emphasis added). From that perspective, a polemicist might even venture to talk about the *opportunities* of busing rather than the burdens. But that would be bending the stick almost as far in one direction as *burdens* does in the other. Hence, *responsibilities* appears to hold the appropriate middle ground.

12. This is not to say that the burden or responsibility was shared equally. Among the plan's various inequities was an obvious racial one: black children were generally bused from grade K-3 while white children were generally bused from grades 4-6.

13. To claim busing was a wedge issue is not to argue against it. In fact, towards the end of the paper, I will consider whether busing might had more redistributive benefits had there been greater political unity between blacks and working class whites. An essential component of such unity, in my view, is the willingness to challenge the various manifestations of white supremacy of which Charlotte's segregated school system was certainly one. However, at this point, I am reluctant to speculate how that general principle might have been applied in the context of Charlotte politics in the early 1970s other than to emphasize that it would have involved support for busing though not necessary for the particular plan that was eventually adopted.

14. Facilitating both the ability and perceived need to exempt southeast Charlotte neighborhoods from busing may have been the previous ten years of local development and urban renewal. As noted earlier, these ten years saw an increase in residential segregation in Charlotte as well as the the movement of many working-class whites to outlying areas. A cursory review of such population movements leads me to hypothesize that they increased class segregation among whites and/or increased the distance between white working class neighborhoods and those of more prosperous whites. To the extent this hypothesis is true, it would allow a plan which bused only certain whites (presumably working class ones) to appear more technically feasible as well as to seem more "natural."

15. The use of median individual or household income would be preferable, but the way the 1970 census breaks down county level income data by race makes it impossible to use median measures. On a county level, the 1970 census provides data on blacks and on the entire population. Knowing per capita income for the population and for blacks, it is easy to compute that for whites. However, absent some complicated assumptions about the distribution of both black and total income, it is impossible to make valid inferences about white median income knowing only black median income and median income for the population of the entire county.

I use per capita income rather than mean household income because it is a measure of the "economic resources available to blacks and whites in a way that is independent of family structure and living arrangements" (Jencks 1992, 32). Per capita income comparisons indicate a slightly larger black/white gap than do those involving mean family or household income "largely because blacks have more children than whites" (Jencks 1992, 34), but this difference is largely irrelevant here because I am more interested in comparing trends in the racial gap in different cities than in the absolute magnitude of the gap. And as Jencks and many other scholars note, "the basic reason that blacks are poorer than whites is not that they organize their families the wrong way but that individual blacks earn less money (1992, 34).

16. These counties are Clayton, Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton, and Gwinnet. The city of Atlanta lies within the boundaries of Dekalb and Fulton counties. Hence income and wealth data for these two counties includes that for Atlanta just as data for Mecklenburg includes that for Charlotte. In Virginia, on the other hand, major cities lie outside county boundaries. Consequently, data for Richmond must be combined with that from Chesterfield and Henrico counties.

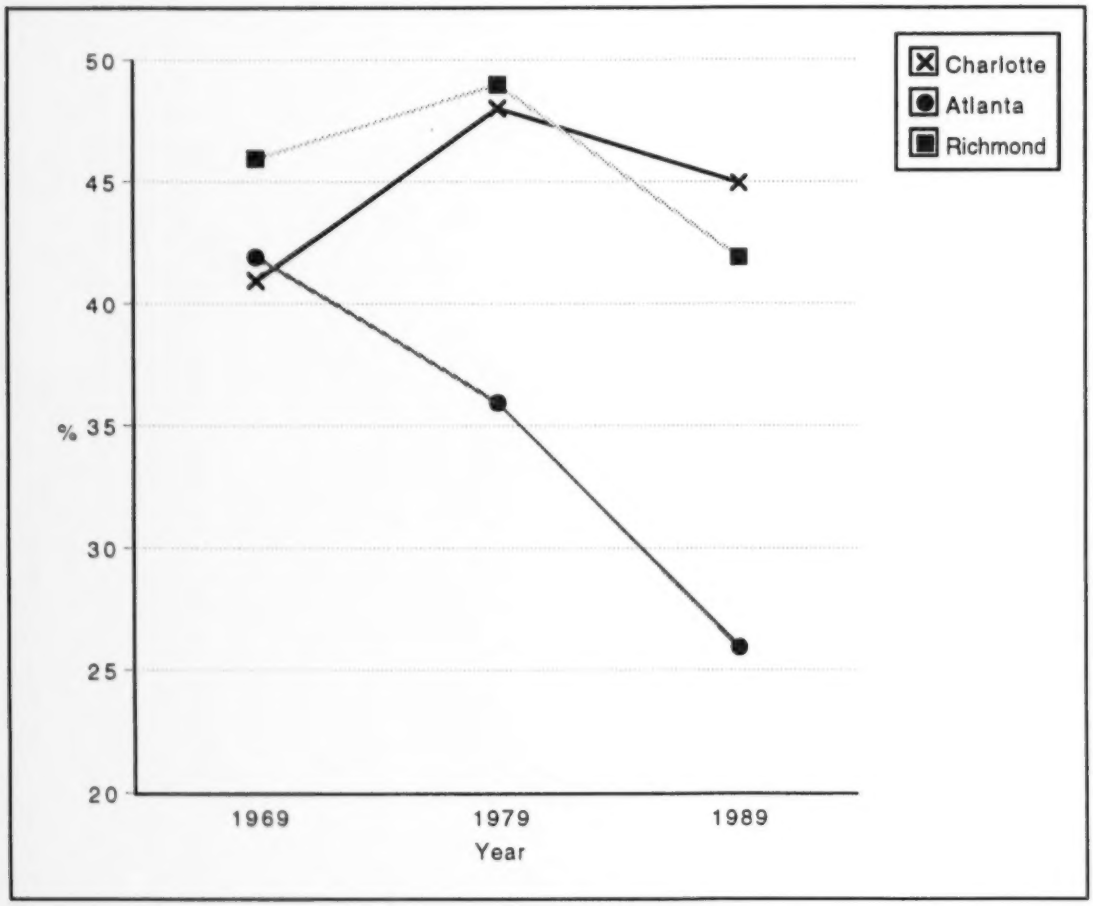
17. The rate of black home ownership is obtained by dividing the number of owner-occupied black households by the number of black households. The rate of white home ownership is computed in a similar manner.

18. Furthermore, I suspect that the results would be similar if the economic situation of blacks in the cities of Atlanta and Richmond were compared with those in what local planners call Charlotte's "City Within a City,"--an area roughly coterminous with a circle whose center is the central business district and whose diameter is five miles. From that perspective, one could hypothesize that city of Charlotte's recent elasticity is as important an explanation of the relative economic well-being of its black population as any other factor.

19. Missing from this list is the notion that was praised by many and opposed only by those few whose partial interests stand in conflict with community interests. In 1970 the busing plan scarcely satisfied that criterion. In 1985, it may have.

**FIGURE I:**

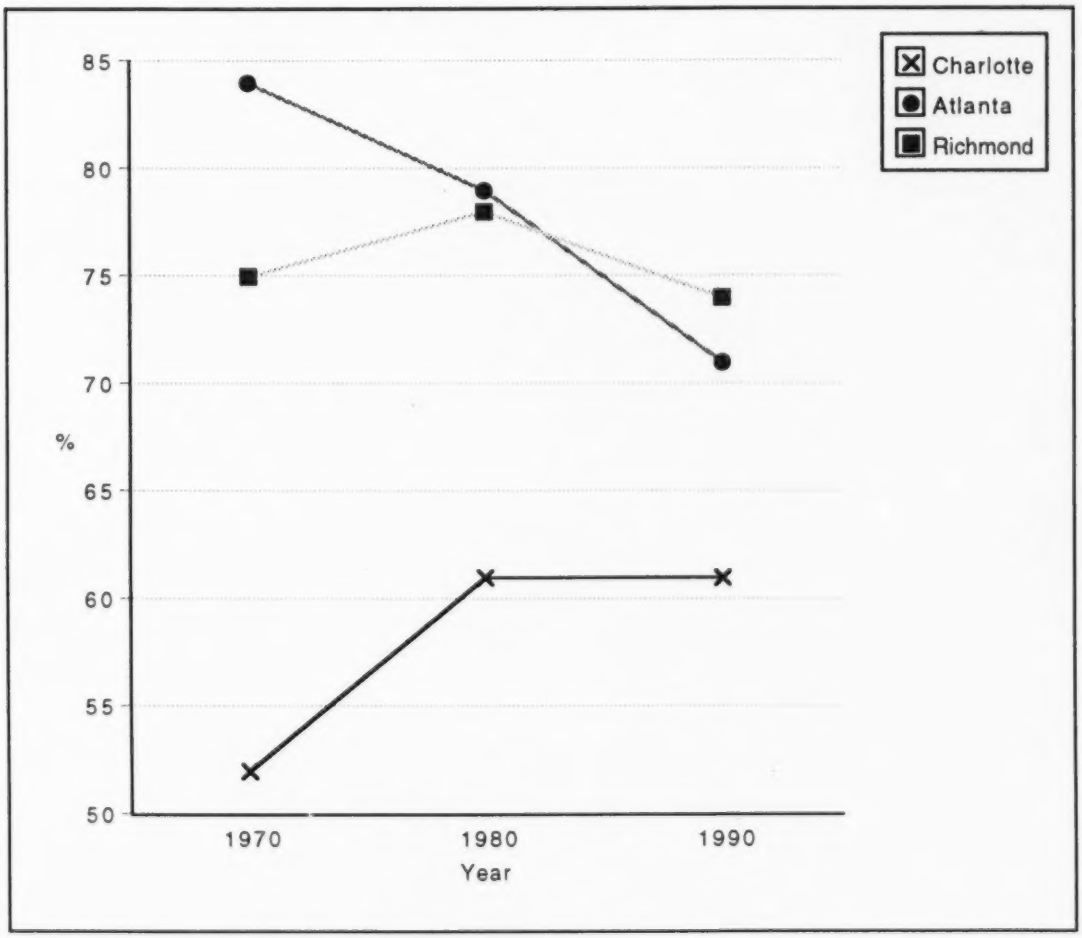
**BLACK PER CAPITA INCOME AS % OF WHITE PER CAPITA INCOME**
**CENTRAL CITIES**
**1969-1989**




*Source:* Computed from data in Table II.

## FIGURE II

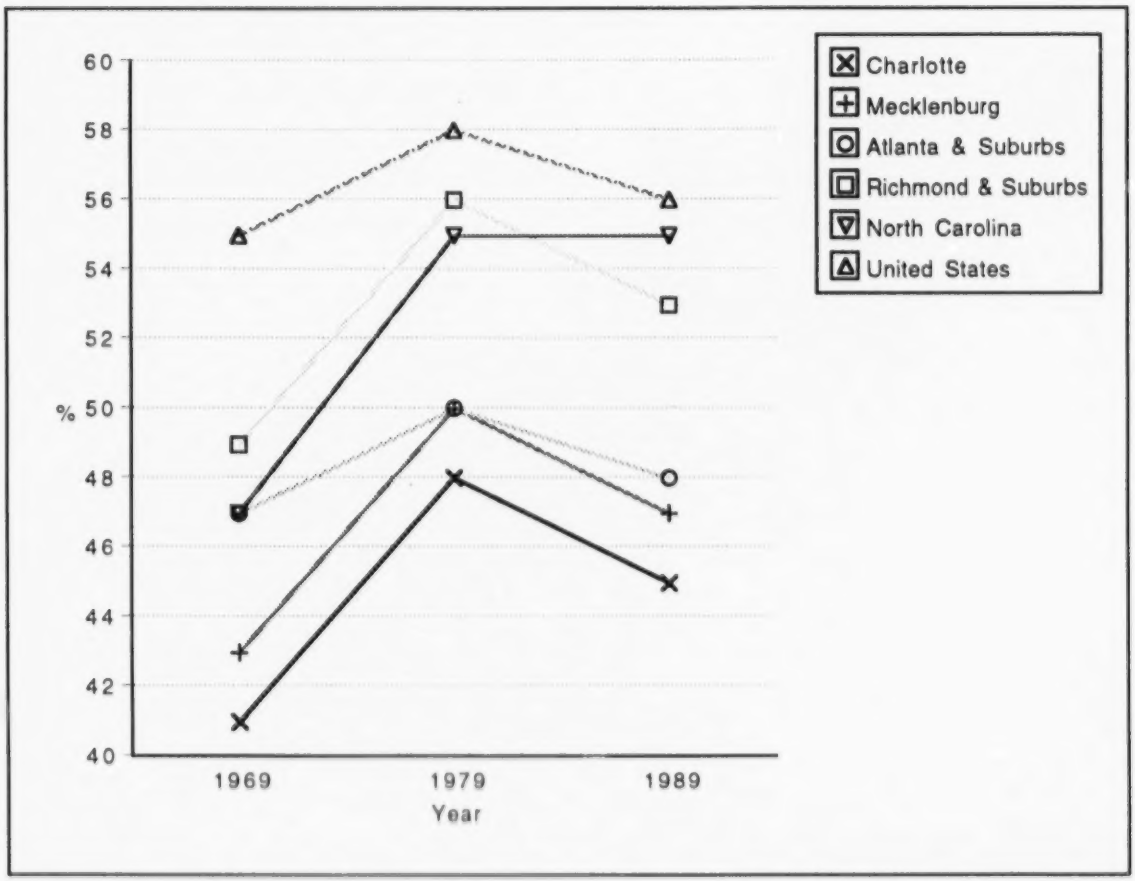
**RATE OF BLACK HOME OWNERSHIP AS % OF RATE OF WHITE HOME OWNERSHIP**
**CENTRAL CITIES**
**1970-1990**




*Source:* Computed from data in Table III.

**FIGURE III:**

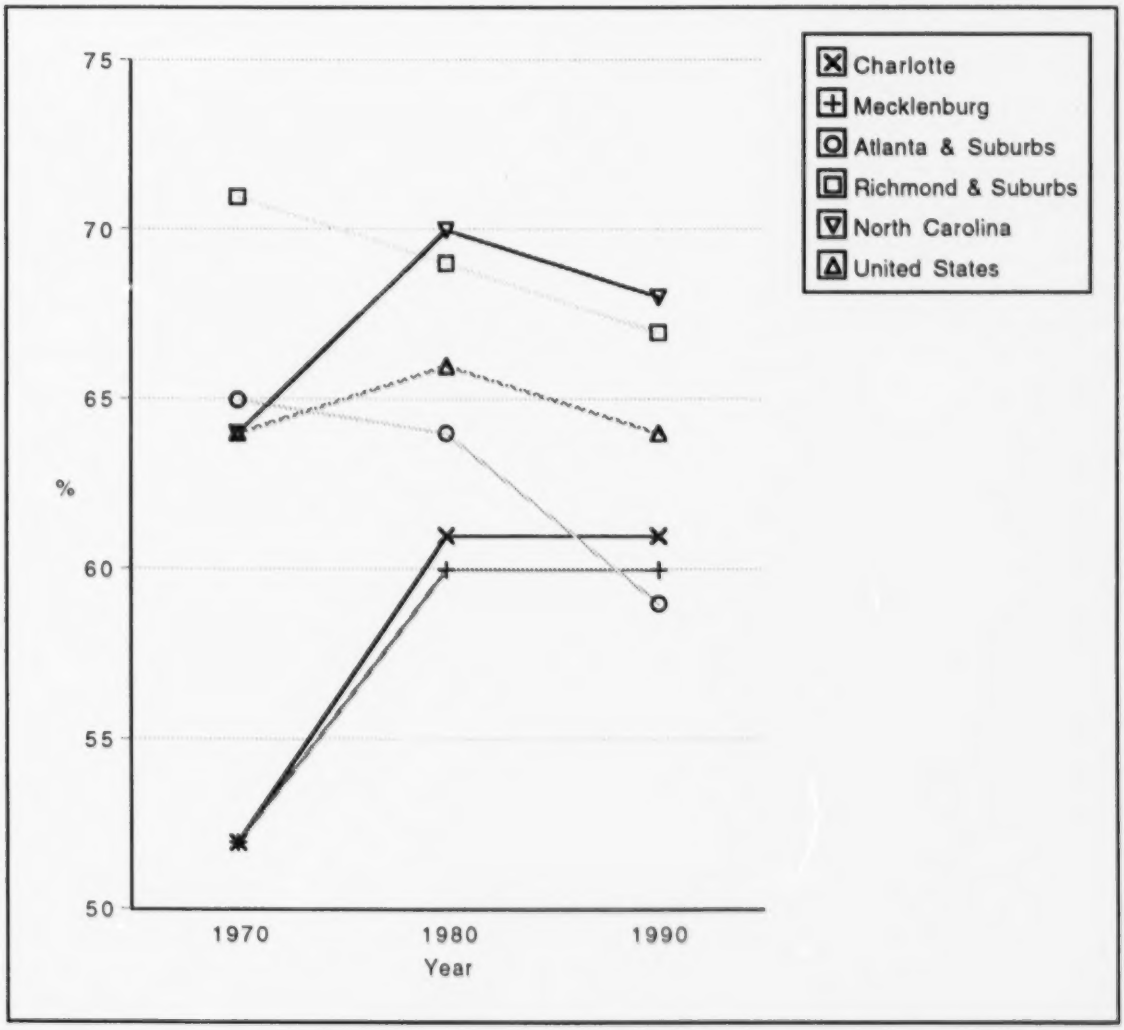
**BLACK PER CAPITA INCOME AS % OF WHITE PER CAPITA INCOME**
**SELECTED AREAS**
**1969-1989**




*Source:* Computed from data in Table II.

## FIGURE IV

**RATE OF BLACK HOME OWNERSHIP AS % OF RATE OF WHITE HOME OWNERSHIP**
**SELECTED AREAS**
**1970-1990**




*Source:* Computed from data in Table III.

**TABLE I: ELECTORAL SUPPORT FOR BROOKSHIRE: 1961-1965**

| PRECINCT NUMBER & NAME | | % OF VOTE FOR BROOKSHIRE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *year:* | 1961 | 1963 | 1965 |
| *White Working Class Precincts* | | | | |
| 13 | Villa Heights | 41 | 25 | 33 |
| 14 | Hawthorne | 48 | 25 | 24 |
| 24 | Enderly Park | 49 | 40 | 36 |
| 27 | Tryon Hills | 44 | 52 | 29 |
| 30 | Highland | 31 | 26 | 23 |
| 40 | Thomasboro | 28 | 44 | 37 |
| 41 | Hoskins | 32 | 16 | 19 |
| *Black Precincts* | | | | |
| 2 | Second Ward | 15 | 90 | 94 |
| 3 | Zeb Vance | 62 | 64 | 89 |
| 25 | Northwest | 7 | 89 | 99 |
| 26 | Double Oaks | 19 | 97 | 96 |

*Source:* Computed from elections returns publicly available at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Elections

*Note:* Table entries are percentage of vote for Brookshire.

## TABLE II: PER CAPITA INCOME 1969-1989

| | 1969 | 1979 | 1989 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Charlotte | | | |
| # blacks | 73.0 | 99.2 | 126 |
| #whites | 167 | 212 | 260 |
| per capita black income | 1.654 | 4.467 | 9.286 |
| per capita white income | 4.001 | 9.368 | 20.639 |
| Atlanta | | | |
| # blacks | 255 | 283 | 264 |
| #whites | 240 | 138 | 122 |
| per capita black income | 1.909 | 4.166 | 8.043 |
| per capita white income | 4.495 | 11.442 | 31.228 |
| Richmond | | | |
| # blacks | 105 | 112 | 112 |
| #whites | 144 | 105 | 88.0 |
| per capita black income | 1.881 | 4.700 | 8.676 |
| per capita white income | 4.115 | 9.613 | 20.876 |
| Mecklenburg | | | |
| # blacks | 84.2 | 107 | 135 |
| #whites | 269 | 291 | 364 |
| per capita black income | 1.654 | 4.514 | 9.424 |
| per capita white income | 3.845 | 9.113 | 19.850 |
| Atlanta & Selected Suburbs | | | |
| # blacks | 311 | 462 | 660 |
| #whites | 1076 | 1205 | 1447 |
| per capita black income | 1.860 | 4.709 | 10.328 |
| per capita white income | 3.971 | 9.381 | 21.428 |
| Richmond & Selected Suburbs | | | |
| # blacks | 123 | 153 | 183 |
| #whites | 356 | 382 | 433 |
| per capita black income | 1.906 | 5.081 | 10.199 |
| per capita white income | 3.870 | 9.090 | 19.286 |
| North Carolina | | | |
| # blacks | 1126 | 1319 | 1456 |
| #whites | 3901 | 4460 | 5008 |
| per capita black income | 1.342 | 3.778 | 7.926 |
| per capita white income | 2.839 | 6.873 | 14.450 |
| United States | | | |
| # blacks | 22589 | 26482 | 29986 |
| #whites | 177748 | 189035 | 199686 |
| per capita black income | 1.818 | 4.545 | 8.859 |
| per capita white income | 3.314 | 7.808 | 15687 |

*Source:* United States Census.

*Note:* All entries are in thousands.

## TABLE III: HOME OWNERSHIP 1970-1990

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Charlotte | | | |
| # black households | 20144 | 31382 | 44003 |
| #white households | 56582 | 84987 | 111984 |
| # black owner-occupied households | 6262 | 11706 | 16568 |
| # white owner-occupied households | 33590 | 52187 | 69567 |
| Atlanta | | | |
| # black households | 71169 | 94570 | 92812 |
| #white households | 90690 | 66484 | 60718 |
| # black owner-occupied households | 26583 | 35252 | 34780 |
| # white owner-occupied households | 40098 | 31537 | 31875 |
| Richmond | | | |
| # black households | 29891 | 37508 | 41673 |
| #white households | 52591 | 47537 | 42722 |
| # black owner-occupied households | 12142 | 15342 | 16437 |
| # white owner-occupied households | 28364 | 24839 | 22707 |
| Mecklenburg | | | |
| # black households | 22753 | 34013 | 46487 |
| #white households | 86416 | 111196 | 150169 |
| # black owner-occupied households | 7867 | 13601 | 18430 |
| # white owner-occupied households | 57854 | 74232 | 99437 |
| Atlanta & Selected Suburbs | | | |
| # black households | 84277 | 151710 | 230315 |
| #white households | 344276 | 452521 | 580078 |
| # black owner-occupied households | 33666 | 62233 | 90467 |
| # white owner-occupied households | 212827 | 289192 | 385638 |
| Richmond & Selected Suburbs | | | |
| # black households | 34265 | 50243 | 66180 |
| #white households | 118069 | 146527 | 177872 |
| # black owner-occupied households | 15545 | 23042 | 30428 |
| # white owner-occupied households | 75909 | 96764 | 122178 |
| North Carolina | | | |
| # black households | 280490 | 392002 | 490360 |
| #white households | 1224522 | 1623193 | 1979986 |
| # black owner-occupied households | 126219 | 199828 | 243438 |
| # white owner-occupied households | 855307 | 1181820 | 1442521 |
| United States | | | |
| # black households | 6180260 | 8381668 | 9919313 |
| #white households | 56529374 | 68810123 | 76959531 |
| # black owner-occupied households | 2567920 | 3724251 | 4301431 |
| # white owner-occupied households | 36978651 | 46670775 | 52472769 |

*Source:* United States Census.

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